

Spring 1967

UA68/6/2 Voices, Vol. XI, No. 2

Western Writers

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_org



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Western Writers, "UA68/6/2 Voices, Vol. XI, No. 2" (1967). *Student Organizations*. Paper 69.
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_org/69

This Magazine is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Organizations by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact connie.foster@wku.edu.

Duplicate

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
ARCHIVES

C R E A T I V E W R I T I N G ■



B Y W E S T E R N S T U D E N T S

Spring, 1967

Voices

Voices

Vol. XI No. 2

SPRING 1967

STAFF

Editor Dennis Petrie

Associate Editor Beverly McCrocklin

*Assistant Editors Beth McDaniel
Tommy Winstead
John Carpenter
Judy Williams*

Business Manager Dick Walters

Faculty Advisor Joseph Boggs

Published by

WESTERN WRITERS

An Undergraduate Literary Organization of

Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green, Kentucky

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SOMETHING IN A MINOR KEY	1
<i>a short story by Beverly McCrocklin</i>	
SUMMER SONGS.	4
<i>a poem by Tommy Winstead</i>	
SAD THOUGHTS ARE MY COMPANIONS	5
<i>a poem by Ron Lawrence</i>	
A COLOURATION	5
<i>a poem by Rick Seitz</i>	
CATCH A FALLING STAR	6
<i>a short story by John Carpenter</i>	
THE GIRL - CHILD SECURITY	10
<i>a poem by Rick Seitz</i>	
BEAT RAIN	10
<i>a poem by Barbara Jean Raber</i>	
LAMENT	11
<i>a poem by Ron Lawrence</i>	
FUGUE IN C	11
<i>a poem by Ron Lawrence</i>	
FIRE OF DUSK	12
<i>a poem by David H. Denton</i>	
BROWN DEAD LEAVES	12
<i>a poem by Ronald B. Hill</i>	
POSSIBILITIES	12
<i>a poem by Tommy Winstead</i>	
NARCISSISM	13
<i>a poem by Tommy Winstead</i>	
PIROUETTE	14
<i>a descriptive essay by Susan Whitfield Streible</i>	
COBWEB - LIGHT IN THE BREEZE	15
<i>a poem by Ronald B. Hill</i>	
SYNDROME	15
<i>a poem by John Carpenter</i>	

WIND IN THE NEW HOUSE	16
<i>a poem by John Carpenter</i>	
AWARENESS	16
<i>a poem by Diana Dale</i>	
WHOLLY HOLY, AND HOLEY	17
<i>a short story by Dan Irwin</i>	
EXEGESIS	20
<i>a poem by Earl Paulus Murphy</i>	
BLACK LACE	22
<i>a poem by Barbara Townley-Jones</i>	
AFTER THE WAR WITH THE INDIANS	23
<i>a short story by Tommy Winstead</i>	
FREEDOM	25
<i>a poem by Tommy Winstead</i>	
CINCINNATI CORDUROY	26
<i>a poem by Bill Wiedemann</i>	
INTERLUDE	27
<i>a poem by Judy Williams</i>	
MR. O. CYRUS	28
<i>a laedycal by Dennis Petrie</i>	
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR	31

A Short Story by Beverly McCrocklin

The wind swayed the trees in grotesque parodies of gyrating dancers. And in the distance, but somehow close came icy tinkling, infinitesimal showers, spiraling downward in a thin, fine harmony. Valerie, standing still and alone, felt before she heard. Felt the prickling touch her, felt the world stop, time cease. Suddenly she was enmeshed in music. Thin, fine airy music that played around her and could not be what she heard, yet inexplicably was. It swelled around her, lapping her with soft touches. It was within her, for without she heard the tinkling and knew. Wind chimes, brushing, hitting, striking. Yet inside the music grew, resounding, ever clearer, coming closer and she opened her eyes and heard.

It was "Feux-Follets" and she played, Gamma sat listening, intensely. And she, Valerie, turned and in an instant truly saw. Gamma was not sitting peacefully, but staring blindly at her hands. She was forcing them, willing them to move. Valerie saw the flicker of pain cross her face, saw her disappointment as the gnarled, arthritic hands refused to parody the playing. In that instant Valerie ceased her own playing and just as quickly Gamma knew herself watched and stopped. The startled eyes batted and were composed, the hands stilled. "Valerie, you're not stopping, surely. Please play on, it's as though I were playing myself, again . . . Valerie, what's wrong?"

And Valerie turned then, turned quickly, had begun to play hard and fast, to flee the sudden realization of what she had discovered, to protect that realization from Gamma, to keep the truth unspoken.

Unspoken words whirled in Valerie's mind and the spinning room slowed slowly and finally stopped. Light and feeling invaded her again as she looked quickly around the room. All was the same. Outside the wind chimes played blindly on and inside everything was in its accustomed place. On the table lay the box of chocolates as it had always lain.

Suddenly Katherine, dear Aunt Katherine swam into view, hovering over the chocolates. And Gamma spoke, gesturing, offering, "Now don't be satisfied with only one piece, take three or four." From the same box that Gamma only allowed herself one a day from, to save against the time when there would be no more. Valerie saw Katherine's face as she took the three or maybe even four pieces, a bloated face like someone long dead under the sea, with stringy seaweed hair wrapping her face like Medusa's tresses. Katherine, grabbing, eating, taking, but never replacing, taking, but never giving.

Suddenly small gifts, any gifts seemed important. Looking around the room Valerie saw Gamma's gifts to her. A velvet pincushion in the image of a strawberry, fat and rounded and smooth, a cameo brooch, old and stained by years, but still creamy ivory with a fine chisled beauty. And there on the shelf, a set of tiny China cups and saucers, intricately designed with huge full-blooming dusky roses and tiny blue strawflowers in French bouquets. Gamma's set that had belonged to her as a child and then was Valerie's. Or the mystifying timeworn paperweight with perpetual snow that had felt a million hands turn it and examine. A scene to fill a lifetime with, a soft wintry Currier and Ives etching, a dark barn, deep dark woods hung with glistening snow, shimmering skaters on a frozen lake, scintillating to the falling beat of fleecy, swirling flakes. A winter masterpiece, still and perpetually pure. Gifts that would have cost nothing to one who had much, but Gamma's were from small savings kept against the day she had feared she might need them. A small reserve stretched against infinity. A place of warmth against the cold reach of time.

In the cold distance, far away, a rocker creaked slowly, grating a little.

Gamma spoke softly, in a thin, quiet voice. "I am only tired, Valerie, Katherine has been here all day, she has prattled on about their problems and how they cannot make ends meet and she has worn me through." Gamma's eyes stood out clearly, tired, worn. "I am only tired, of course I was sick yesterday. I ate something, you must not worry so about me, Valerie. You should not bother. I am not ill." And the week after and again there was only food that was not to be eaten and that was all, just food. Valerie would not utter the phrases she feared—but cancer fled through the house like dead leaves, falling, crackling, scraping in a barren world.

"Katherine called again, she fears they will go bankrupt, must she drain me dry? She threatens to leave him again, but she only whispers it.

"Valerie, you must understand, Katherine cannot cope, she is at the mercy of her husband and I fear he—. She has changed, Valerie, she no longer thinks, but growls. Once I had hoped, but—

"I am only a bit tired today, I must rest for I have seen the lawyers in town—oh, Valerie, do you not want anything? anything? anything?

"The lawyers have helped me take precautions against them. Hush, now, I will talk about it. I know I will die soon and you, you must learn to see things as they are, just as I. Everything is secure now and I will not be taken by surprise. How could I be surprised, child. I know them for what they are. They cannot hide it, hide it, hide it"

Gamma's voice faded softly and in its place another sound filled the room. Far, far away a dog howled mournfully.

Suddenly it was night, summer night, warm moist creek-smell rising, night air cooling. And far away across the hill it was old Buster that moaned, distant and lonely. Gamma had quickly reassured, "He's just chasing rabbits and he's lost the trail, no need to worry about him. Why in the morning he'll be home and happy again. Just sit still child and listen to the night."

The old porch swing creaked softly as they swung together and soft at first, then louder in the warm darkness, the katydid began "katy-did," "katy-didn't." A gentle rasping sound that lulled and lulled till finally Valerie was asleep.

Or else at twilight they swung together quickly, making the air fan them with its breeze and they played the twilight game. In the growing dark the tall trees against the hill made silhouettes. Perhaps the shape of two lovers against the stars or else a girl with huge flowers on her head, or Gamma said, two horsemen riding high. And then too dark to see, they counted fireflies. Valerie had learned her numbers counting them. Gamma said, "One, two, three. How many more, Valerie? Three, four, five"

But, outside it was twelve. The old clock struck it slowly, an hour at a time. A dull, harsh metallic clang that interrupted everything. An erupting clang that interrupted . . . interrupted . . . chiming the hour to give Gamma her pills, interrupting her sleep, interrupting conversation, ah, yes, interrupting conversation on the stairs.

George was there with Nan. Katherine's husband George and sister Nan, huddled on the landing, whispering in crackling tones. George's rasping voice floated up, drawing out Gamma's name until it must have screamed to come out of his mouth. George mouthing his words, rolling them like marbles, "She's gone for good this time."

"Perhaps, she may die, she is very ill, George." Dear Nan, chiming in with just the right notes.

"She's lived a good life, she can't expect to live forever." He whipped it out, short, gratingly. Valerie could just see him as she came down the stairs. Even from above, he still looked tall and thin, his body stretched like the reaching girders of a skyscraper under construction. Infinitely thin and ever-hungry, his eyes were ravenous pits. His thin bones stood out underneath his tight skin, stretching it like leather hung in the sun to dry.

"I've told Katherine to see to the will; she's gone for the lock box now." he paused, but his voice droned on and on, a broken record, always chim-

ing the same endless note.

"George, how can you be so calloused, so . . ." Nan interjected in her shocked pink all over tone again.

"Oh, don't you worry yourself. We're going to take care of your part. But if its going to be anything like I get it from Katherine, well we've got to stick together through this. We have to make our plans, no beating around the bush, no taking the back seat. No sir, there are ways to break things and get what's lawfully ours. And you know how the old lady feels about—"

George had stopped then. Valerie saw to it. Her loud steps crackled down the stairs and she saw their shadows whirling away behind the stairs, fleeing by the old clock in the hall.

The last chime of the clock was faint. A clinking noise like the sound of rusted metal against stone. The clock was slowing down, was close to stopping. It was so old now, it had to be rewound more and more frequently, but now there was no need. No need to change a clock that only kept slow time in a world that did not go fast. Was it only yesterday or a million yesterdays since the earth received its tiny load? Was it a million years since the time on the steps, since Gamma was well and George had tried to seem the same as before? And then the long health and that repeated tiredness. And then, the one long eternal night that had no morning, no steps coming downstairs after a good nights sleep and no awakening ever again. No sleepy yawnings, no faltering footsteps, no morning sausage and waffles or coffee conversation ever again.

It was a long eternal night broken only by alien feet that moved and tore and searched the house and alien hands that grabbed and ripped and divided clothes and furniture in unequal parts. And worst of all, loud, brash, alien mouths, screaming and complaining in a maelstrom of jilted pride and greed and thwarted desire. Screaming at the very walls to give up their coat of paint if it could have been taken. All this let loose, while far away, in dim-lit solitary peace, someone who looked like Gamma lay still and the someone who once was Valerie sat frozen by the pale, cloying sweetness of the pallid bouquets and the high shrill laughter that rippled from the back row of on-watchers and cut the silence into knife-sharp shreds.

Out in the distance, yet somehow close, wind chimes shredded music into a clinking, jangling cacophony. Valerie paused, listening intensely, as she felt the door close tightly and heard the light click of the lock. She shivered faintly in the intense cold and heard the tiny echoing response of the little cups and saucers in her parcel of Gamma's gifts. For a moment, just a single moment, her fingers gently traced the worn familiar smoothness of the paperweight. Then she closed the parcel tightly and walked quickly out into the swirling, perpetual snow.

Now the hollow moan of the wind swept wide across the fields and the knock of a flapping barn door came and faded. The wind lapped around the eaves of the house and rapped fiercely at the windows and seemed to moan, "Val....er...ie...e..e." But the only answer came from far away where, somewhere, wind chimes struck a wind tune of something in a minor key.

SUMMER SONGS

With our hearts drifting
with the excited, thundering summer winds.
we ran,
side by side,
naked in the night
through the barley
and forget-me-nots
to a secluded shore
where we played
our precious little games
and sang
silent summer songs.
While our shadows danced
enchanted charades
with each silver grain of sand
our lives
were rushing past
like rivers
relentlessly
emptying into time,
and if only for a second
we were not afraid
for we built a massive, blinding fire
which burned,
crimson and blue,
and dangerously close
to the water's edge,
where we heard
the throbbing, objecting sea rise
to seize our defiant light.
then
as though promised
another thousand irresponsible years
the tides slid away
into the forgotten
and we two parted,
strangers still,
to once again
run,
naked in the night.

Tommy Winstead

SAD THOUGHTS ARE MY COMPANIONS

*Sad thoughts are my companions
They are my bedfellows
I sleep with them; eat with them;
They eat me.
Sad thoughts
Of blood stains on grassy fields and
Semen strains on monopoly boards.
Of axes lodged deep in bowels and
Arms probing into empty mailboxes.*

*Grassy fields erode
Men disembowel themselves
But the blood and the axes remain.*

*Sad thoughts are my companions
Thoughts of
Worn-out prophets falling from wooden phallic symbols and
Obscure images floating quietly over clear pools.
Thoughts of
Men talking to rocks and patiently waiting for answers
While others dive into pools to commune with their reflections.*

*Wooden images decay
Pools become stagnant
But rocks remain rocks*

*And still I remain
With my sad companions.*

Ron Lawrence

A COLOURATION

*Evening sorrow's bluish taste
lingers,
Her face beckons caressing
fingers.
Youth is but reddish-yellow old
wrapped in the age
of innocent love
And green morning tears.
Young lovers go black
as eyes close.
Sweet violet is heard
touch is burgundy.
Preconditioned gestures reveal
(no longer conceal)
Death is color-blind.*

Rick Seitz

CATCH A FALLING STAR

A Short Story by John Carpenter

It came, a spot in the sky, quickly, like the rush of hot air or the falling of a raindrop. And then, as suddenly as it had begun, it was over.

The sleek crimson coal fell down across the northern arc. It began decreasing in size somewhere in the translucent layers of the ionosphere. The wind peeled the searing edges off the glowing seed inside, and the fiery core hissed against the tongues of the sky.

Before it hit earth the thing made a great flash. As drops of rain pelted the throbbing spark, it spit a spray of fire and pulsated wildly in the darkness. There was a low moan, and then shreds of heat were stripped off by its speed. Lashes of red-orange whipped out into the air.

Then it hit the earth with a screaming that ended in a glump. It burrowed itself down into the soft, wet mud. Breaths of fire shot at the grass around it but died as raindrops quenched the licking, hot fingers. Mud piled on top of the burning ball and the heat turned to black smoke. The loam oozed and tempted itself over the fizzing thing.

At first the mud bubbled and sucked, and there was a sharp hissing, but then the coolness of the slime lulled the alien to silence.

The lines of his long, black hair whipped back from his face and extended themselves with the wind. His eyes never moved. They stared forward, marble-glazed. His lips were thin, straight lines, void of expression.

A statue, out of place with evil, black hair exploding from the top of his head.

He was slim. There were rigid, slender lines on his body—no bulk, no cavities. He wore complete black: a tattered jacket, sweater, slacks, and glassy boots with thick heels. His hands were small, the fingers ice-thin. There were no wrinkles on his skin, not even under the folds of his fingers where his flesh had expanded and contracted a million times.

He had been staring for an hour, letting the night breezes of earth wash against him.

Now he crunched up the broken shoulder of a deserted road. Lashes of wind played with the ends of his jacket. On either side of the road trees lifted their witch-fingers skyward, swaying, crackling. Clouds crossed the sky and revealed winged night creatures, fluttering without sound, incredibly fast. There was no moon nor stars, only black hair hanging in darkness.

He kept walking.

Jason picked up the phone and dialed hurriedly. He listened to the soft purring in the receiver and the click as the call was answered. An old tongue moistened dried lips.

"Lo?"

"Lo. Amos?"

"Yeah. That you Jason?"

"Yeah. Sorry to bother you late."

There was a silence. "It's past twelve. What's the trouble, Jason?"

"Millie thought I shouldn't have called, but I figured I'd better. I was gittin' the asphalt roofing tied down on the shed, since they's a wind blowing..."

"I been workin' all day on mine."

"I figured I could work late and not have to worry with it tomorrow. Ain't much I can do, though, 'cept tie down the ends and keep the middle from bulgin'. But that ain't what I called you about. Like I said, I was

finally gittin' the roof finished when I saw this boy walkin' through the yard right past me, back into the field, out toward the big sink hole."

Another silence. "So?"

"He was no usual boy, Amos. That's what I'm gittin' at. He had real long hair. Long as I ever seen on a man. Looked as if he hadn't had it cut in a year. He wore real black clothes and walked real slow, just like he was lookin' for something. I hollered at him, where he could surely hear me, but he just kept walkin'."

"Jason . . ."

"Amos, I wouldn't have called you if I didn't think it was important. I hollered at him, but he just kept walkin', right out to the sink hole. And they's no tellin' what he's doin' out there. Millie's scared and so am I."

"You said he was a boy. Run him off."

"I never seen a boy like this before. He was scary. I don't dare go out in that field alone. Come on up here and help me, Amos. Just take you a minute."

"Dammit it, Jason, it's late."

"Please, Amos. I know what time it is. But this boy has got me real scared. He ain't natural. He might be lurkin' out there, waitin' for me to come out after him."

"I've been in bed for . . ."

"Please."

Silence. "Give me five minutes."

They met just outside the farmhouse under a dull porch lamp. The smooth black barrels of their guns jeweled under the light. They spoke a minute, their breaths misty in the night air, and then stalked out toward the back pasture. The field was freshly plowed and their boots sank in the soft earth. They hunched their backs with the night's current, their overalls flapping around bunched nightshirts. In the dark their eyes were blue embers.

Suddenly, from behind them, a witch shrieked across the field in a funnel of dust. She waddled toward the two men, her clothes hanging about her in a torn, gray tapestry. Her eyes were sunken pits that narrowed and glistened, and silvered-black hair dripped from her head. From her swollen, toothless mouth came guttural utterances like the screeching of an enormous, frightened bird.

"Millie, go back," said Jason.

The shrieking continued.

"Get out of here. Dammit, you might get hurt."

"Go to hell," she spit at him.

"Millie, go home and wait. Amos and I can git him."

"Shut-up." She pushed back a wedding of dark-rooted gray with a withered hand. "Brave man. Havin' to call Amos Sommers just to run off a boy. Livin' a mile away, and you had to call him up here to help you."

"I don't mind, Mrs. Tuck."

"I told you to stay home, Millie."

"Shut-up. I'm not goin' home."

They started walking. The shrieking continued.

In the center of the field was the sink hole, and to right of it, in the plowed area, was a large pit. As if dredged by an iron jaw that scooped the loam and devoured it, the hole was almost perfectly cylindrical, and appeared only a few feet in diameter.

He stood down inside the crater. He didn't notice them move up and stand by the end, their guns leveled at him.

"All right." Git out slow.

He looked at them. The barrels of their guns were endless tunnels. He didn't move.

"I said git up out of there," said Jason, hissing between his teeth. There

was silence, no movement. "What are you doin'? You're ruining my field. It took me near a week to plow all this."

"Jason, look. He's got somethin' there in his hands. Looks like a long tube of some kind."

"Watch him. It may be a weapon."

Their voices were harsh, gusty. He looked at them, and at their guns, but said nothing.

"Listen, son," said Amos. "We can shoot you for trespassin' and destroyin' property. This is his land, Jason's. You got no right to dig it up."

His eyes were placid.

"Git out before I blow your head off!" Jason whipped the air with his rifle.

"What are you diggin' for? Why are you tearin' up his field?"

"Look at him, dammit. He ain't talkin'. He hadn't said a word."

"I bet he's diggin' with that tube."

Millie cackled. "Look there. Down by his feet. It's a picture."

"Looks like a photograph."

"He's tearin' up my field for a picture."

He looked down. The picture was in a small metal frame, laid carefully beside his feet. He picked it up and brought it slowly to his eye level.

"It's a girl in the picture, Jason. Look at it."

"What is this? He's tearin' up my field for a picture."

"She's strange," said Amos slowly. "She's sorta like he is. Look at the picture; her mouth is out of shape, and her nose. . ."

Both men stirred. They caressed the stocks of their guns.

"Look," Millie screeched. "Look at his eyes. He's cryin'! Look."

"What?"

"He's cryin'. Look at him."

His eyes were vitreous in the darkness; he stared at the old, worn piece of black slate, the picture etched on crumbling rock, then closed his eyes and laid it back on the dirt.

"What's goin' on?" asked Amos. "This ain't right."

"Is he diggin' for . . .?"

"What should we do?"

He looked up. They shifted restlessly above him. There were centuries on his face, star systems, galaxies, universes of searching etched in the soft creases on his eyelids.

"This just ain't right, none of it. I don't know what to do, Jason."

"We'd better git him out of there . . ."

"No!" Millie gasped.

"What is it?"

"Millie, what's wrong?"

"Look. . . down there, in the corner of the hole. . ."

The men stared. Behind his boots, pushing up from beneath the loam, was a slender, livid-white finger. It was old, fantastically old, and withered with cracks of brown soil. He looked at it, and then back at them.

Millie grunted. "Look, in the dirt. That girl in the picture. . ."

"The photograph. . ."

"She's buried . . . under here . . ."

"What'll we do?"

Amos shivered. "It's so old. Look at the finger, Jason. It looks a million years old."

"What are ya gunna do?" Millie whispered.

"How'd he know it was here?"

"I said what are ya gunna do, dammit?"

"He musta' killed her."

"No," said Amos. "He's just diggin' her up."

"You watch him, Jason. You watch. He might try somethin'. . ."

Amos stared into quiet, lonely eyes. "No. He's been cryin'. He didn't kill her. Come to git her, that's all."

"What the hell are you talkin' about?"

"Jason, you better hand him over to somebody. He's crazy."

"Be quiet, Millie."

"I said hand him over. . ."

Amos looked at the picture. "She was kinda pretty, in a strange way. She looks like him."

"Are you gunna do somethin', Jason?"

"Help me, Amos. Let's git him out. Git out of there, you." Jason aimed his rifle at the boy's head. "Git out."

He didn't move. His thin fingers danced around the metallic tube.

"Maybe he don't understand us," said Amos.

"Git out of there, damn you. I'm givin' you to three."

"He's not movin'," screamed Millie.

"One."

"She must be just a few feet below," said Amos.

"Git out. Two."

He pointed the small tube down. An arrow of green spit into the dirt.

"Look at that! Jason, look!"

"It's a weapon, a gun of some kind. Amos, git your gun ready."

"Jason!"

"Millie git back!"

"No! Jason. . ."

Jason's gun opened up. There were two bursts, two eruptions in the darkness, and then silence. The three of them stood at the edge, looking down. Amos was motionless; Jason wiped the sweat from his forehead and shifted uneasily. "But he was ruinin' my field. . ."

THE GIRL-CHILD SECURITY

*A girl-child beneath a fern
waded knee deep
in the music of a lute.
We quenched our thirst
from clear pools of flowing simplicity.
For supper
there were green senti-mints.
Your sweetwatering eyes
made sunflower shacks
indigo blue . . .
-- You are but a waterfall
of my mind--
Pure poetic rain
tastes of wine sounds.
While apathetic neon signs
write epistles
to lonely people,
Trickling thoughts provoke
the ponderance
of Security
for she has found another lover.*

Rick Seitz

BEAT RAIN

*Beat, rain
Melt the bitterness
Of winter
Remove the dirt within
This winter-weary world.
I long to creep
To the musty cave
Within myself
And hide;
But I can not.
I must face life
Like an anemone
Before a spring rain;
Head up and unafraid.*

Barbara Jean Raber

LAMENT

*I heard it said—
Come children,
Put your hatred in a bag
And throw it in the dust.
So I flung mud into the face of Eros.
And the warning countered—
Open the box of regret
And fill it with hope
So I crushed a dream.
I ate violet greens
from the table of tomorrow
And drank the scent of roses
from yesterday's soiled cup.
And the voice said laughing—
Come children,
Play the games of gladness
And run in circles till you fall.
But I—I flew—
Into the dimension of desire
Where we dance to the dirge of regret.*

Ron Lawrence

FUGUE IN C

- I. For
One (I Sea)
Sin (rch)
(the) gle grain
Of (I one) sand
(ly Sea).*
- II. Plea:
Serum
(yet) of
The Ear
Th (I) pro
Tect me
(drown).*
- III. An (tan)
In (gled) un
(in) dated (the)
Mind (Sea weed)
Can (I) not
(am) Sea (blind).*

Ron Lawrence

BROWN DEAD LEAVES

*Brown dead leaves
Murmur
Cold-gnarled limbs
Sigh
Leaf carpeted floor
Whispers—
My name.
He waits
Shall I hunt?
Listening?*

*Falling leaves clicking
Saying
Come restless one
Rest.
Twisted intermeshed limbs
Sighing
Rest wandering one
Tire.
Soft breaking voice
Whispering—
My name.
He waits.
Shall I go?
Willingly?
Am I hunted?*

Ronald B. Hill

NARCISSISM

*A hungry child cried aloud,
I am cold.
people heard
people saw
themselves
buying a second pair
of slacks
to wear
to church
on
Sunday and Wednesday
rituals
they would hear
the preacher-man
say
I am my brothers keeper
and the congregation
would
mentally
chant
Finders, Weepers
Keepers, Losers
and furthermore
preacher-man
out of two thousand
years
of christian humility
we have found
no brothers
yet!
Only
mistresses and studs
beer cans and clubs.
No, we have found
no brothers
not in this wonderful, pious christian land
just
wine bottles and hustlers
selling us
an inexplicit god that is not really
dead;
selling us
for the price
that builds a golden phallic steeple
which crumbles
between
plastic boxes, fertility rites
and
the years of our discontent.*

Tommy Winstead

PIROUETTE

A Descriptive Essay by Susan Whitfield Streible

A droning sheet of rain covers the entire city. Today there will be no blazing sun or light fluffy clouds drifting lazily across the sky, but only pale, grey half-light. Even the glaring lights in offices and stores cannot penetrate the semi-darkness, for these now appear as sickly yellow dots surrounded by a hazy ring. The streets, recently converted into wet, slippery marshes, are bordered by rapidly flowing river-gutters. Soon worms, pink and slimy, will wiggle across the sidewalks, only to be crushed by some steel enforced heel. Cracked, sooty, moisture-streaked buildings line the teeming sidewalks.

A large, barren room occupies the second floor of one such squalid structure. Three pale green walls spotted with greasy fingerprints and dotted with crumbling plaster, around which a cold, metallic bar has been nailed, surround a dusty hardwood floor. A cracked and grimy mirror is located on the fourth wall. Unshaded, blinding 100-watt light bulbs swing back and forth on black brass chains.

Inside this room, thin, gaunt, half-starved men and women wearing dirty, torn black tights and stretched, ill-fitting leotards, practice intricate and demanding ballet steps. Their bodies glisten with sweat. Drops of moisture trickle from their hair and foreheads into blood-shot, swollen eyes. The air is thick with human odor, a mixture of dirt and perspiration. Tiredness and even pain are evident in the straining faces of the dancers. Their lips are dry and swollen, but there is no rest from the ballet. Aching leg muscles strive to keep working. Swollen, blistered, and sometimes bleeding feet pound upon the floor with a monotonous clump, a sound that only the stiff toe in a Capezio shoe can produce. The dancers seldom speak, but when they do, it is in short, monosyllabic grunts, too exhausted and too preoccupied to utter more. A wizened old man raps the wall sharply with his cane to accompany his shrilly ordered instructions. "Arabesque!" "Pirouette!" "Jete!" Too often the dancers have felt the sharp sting of this cane across a muscle which has been unable to obey an order. They must never faint, never rest, and so they keep spinning, leaping, sweating, aching, panting.

Suddenly in the midst of the movement, music is heard. The limpid hauntingly evocative notes of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* issue from the old piano. The tender notes along with the graceful motions of the dancers tell the tragic story of a prince's love for a beautiful swan-maiden. Unnoticed before, pasted to one green wall is a poster; young girls in white, fluffy costumes and handsome, smiling young men pose in front of a background of lofty green trees and a sun-flecked, laughing stream. In the center, a lovely young man and woman gaze longingly at each other as he gently lifts her light, fluttering body upon his shoulder. Within a few short hours, these sordid, perspiring people will be transformed into just such lovely, majestic, fairy-like creatures engaged in a mystical, near divine activity.

Outside, the city remains clothed in the garment of rain; sodden drops keep droning upon the sidewalk. The saturnine sky continues to hang heavily overhead. But now the drooping leaves begin to stir, the laden limbs quiver and sigh as the tree tops slightly nod and bend their heads. A nearly invisible lightness, a faint streak of pallid yellow—but golden just the same—shines upon the glistening leaves and a thin weak ray of sunlight penetrates the sky.

SYNDROME

forethoughts from a time ago. . . .

A bobbing carousel horse tarnished and standing, cold and scowling
at deepening blue
A beneath of jade staring from swishing brown, and then exploding to
strew the ground with black pinecones
Red ants scurrying across a canyon in that certain sidewalk where my
filth had hidden
And last Wednesday through the rain when I first realized I was
completely alone in the torrents of emptiness

four thoughts from now

At last a waist-high sanctuary that becomes endless if you crawl
down deep enough and peer out without sound
Her Gothic tambourine quivers and I seem to listen
The bloated, white-fleshed fish spits a spray of hollow green
and laughs while he floats downstream, belly up
Something pale attaches itself and the maelstrom continues
forever

John Carpenter

COBWEB-LIGHT IN THE BREEZE

Scattering cobweb-light in the breeze
Sun-seared puffballs roll,
Break, covering sky and land seas
White with wind-blown souls.
My mind like a thorn bush,
Entangling puffball
Memories on thorns of recollections.
Flitting scenes quiet, hush
As forgetting time rains fall
Soaking, releasing soul reflections.

Ronald B. Hill

WIND IN THE NEW HOUSE

There are other sounds, of course, all indistinguishable
From one another, but I can hear so plainly that one, hollow
Moaning that seems to fill the dark rooms with pale sound.
It's outside somewhere, breathing chuckles of fury, battering
Down on my roof.

I thought a moment ago I heard a little rain with it, but no,
Just nothing. A big long inhalation that doesn't end. No rain.
I was wrong. Nothing to break the long breathy silence. It's
Outside somewhere, whispering along the eaves and flaking dried
Paint from awnings.

But it's all outside. Nothing to stir the inside of the house.
The ghosts that are chairs and tables and couches and footstools
Are very still and wrinkled. The nails in the walls are skinny
Thumbs from naked plaster. It's outside, somewhere, but I'm
Inside and warm.

But now the ghosts begin to move and flap. It must have been
That shutter banging open. Now it's inside. The ghosts' flesh
Peels. The nail hasn't moved. Now it's inside. The sound is
Louder now. It's inside. The ghosts fly away and underneath are
Chairs and tables and couches and footstools, and I am afraid.

John Carpenter

AWARENESS

Below . . .

Bare boulders.

Above . . .

Myriads of emeralds, amethysts, and zircons.

Trees . . .

Maidens clad in green;

Grasses . . .

Giants in the night;
The wind itself a cloak of warmth,
Wrapping itself around bare arms and faces,
Smoothing back hair,
And drying the tears
Of many wasted years.

One kiss. . .

Boulders, stars, wind disappear.

Now God's golden miracles go unnoticed,
And we add waste to waste and tears to tears.

Diana Dale

A Short Story by Dan Irwin

Archie, waking, groping, rolling over, mouthing syllables, "Phratz, Phemiz, trekersh, pheble."

The bottle, lost a universe from his outstretched hand.

Archie, moaning, coordinating fingers moving arms inching closer. The bottle, in reach now.

Archie, growing ecstatic, accomplishment. Thinking, "mission accomplished, here it comes."

The warmth surging, Archie feeling better. "Damn," says Archie, "Damn," smiling now.

Alley looms. Walls, brick on brick, an intricate pattern of masonry, blocking sunlight. Alley has been Archie's temporary womb. Archie feeling secure in alley's darkness.

Sitting up now, looking at his feet. Amazed at his toes protruding through his shoes. Ten independent appendages. "Fine," says Archie, "fine toes."

From nowhere the frog prince comes. The frog prince taunts Archie, poor Archie.

"Scum," says frog prince. "Archie, you are scum."

"Damn," Archie not smiling.

"You are no good, Archie. You are a no good man."

"Damn," Archie now choking back tears.

The frog prince changes into mother. "Archie my son."

"Mother," Archie crying openly, "mama." Archie hugging air, flailing at mother.

"Don't touch me," screams mother, "worthless son, after all I've done for you."

"Mama," moans Archie.

"Bastard," croaks mother.

Archie, shutting his eyes, turning inward. Fading frog prince, melting mother, visions disappear.

Checking bottle now. Empty. An empty bottle, yesterday's newspaper, a corpse -- Archie.

Archie, moving, attempting an actual two-legged stance. Wobbling up to all fours. Pushing with hands, maintaining a precarious point of balance. Moving upright with maximum effort. A final spasmodic jerk upward. On two legs now, triumphant a moment, then staggering back, grabbing at alley wall. Another push and forward momentum is achieved. Archie moves from his alley womb into the sunlight and is born again.

Colonel Penelope Pennips banging a tamborine, planning the orderly salvation of one hundred thousand souls. Banging with a purpose on a skin taunt tamborine.

Thinking in an orderly rhythm. Thinking of helping the needy, hopeless sinners with the help of Almighty Jehovah.

Thinking of heaven now, streets of gold, temples built by good deeds.

Thinking of her temple seven stories at least by now. "Wham, wham, wham!" Penelope's enthusiasm growing now. She stares at the crowd, the toothless, the stupified. They stare back.

"Like lambs," thinks Penelope, "like innocent lambs, diverted from the slaughter only through carefully considered planning. 'Wham!'"

Penelope's corner is a popular place. Men crowd together there. To stare at Penelope. To stare at each other. Old men, staring and pushing. Pushing to get inside, pushing in the soup line, pushing for a chair in the haven that Penelope offers. Penelope then waiting for a few minutes of quiet while she reveals the nature of the true light. Afterward the swarming horde eats her soup and whenever possible, steals the spoons and bowls.

Today is no different. The usual crowd has gathered, begun staring, and Penelope has prepared herself to step up onto the platform and "wham, wham," enlighten these lambs of darkness.

"Men," says Penelope, "men, you are not traveling down this weary road of life alone. There is one who is with you always. Always at your side in the light of day and in the dark of night. He has not forsaken you as you have him. Won't you return to the fold? Come back to the loving arms of Jesus this day."

Penelope's voice thickening now, overcome with emotion and the bad air of the crowd.

Archie sees the crowd, he hears the blatant beating of a soul sounding drum.

"Food," thinks Archie, and he moves in the direction of the crowd. Hearing the rasping voice of Penelope now, Archie is conditioned to the voice. His gastric juices begin to flow.

"The Serpent," says Colonel Penelope, "the scaly serpent of evil has possessed you all. Won't you come and give yourself over to the loving hand of God? With him you can drive the slithering creature of evil from your flesh."

Penelope, feeling each word now, feeling the power of her spoken word, feeling even the overpowering evil of the satan serpent, trying to take over her body. "Hallelujah," screams Penelope, and the serpent moves. "Get thee out of me, Satan," she moans, and the serpent moves again. "Oh God what a battle, thinks Penelope. Divine love replaces the scaly serpent, oozing in every pore. Penelope, satisfied with her victory, ecstatic in her spiritual upheaval.

The crowd beginning to push, growing more hungry.

Archie, a part of the crowd, but not pushing. He is staring. Staring at Penelope. Amazed for the first time at the beauty of her long delicate nose protruding from her stiffly starched bonnet. Enraptured by her spindly fingers waving a black ribboned tamborine. Delighted by her pale lips mouthing hysterical syllables in a metallic rasping voice. Infatuated by her every movement.

The realization building in the back of his mind now, moving slowly from that primeval darkness to the halflight of consciousness.

"Love," it says. "Love. Archie, you love that woman."

"Love," mumbles Archie. "Love," once again he mouths it.

Penelope, waiting for the trombone solo to finish. Hoping, praying that today she'll get a response. If only one would come over, it would have been worthwhile.

Just then, as if in answer to her prayers, she sees a bald figure moving toward the stand.

Archie, thinking thoughts of love, moving toward Penelope.

The crowd murmurs, "Hey, the son of a bitch is trying to buck the line." The crowd moves around him.

Archie, fighting his way through. "Love," he cries, "I love you."

Penelope, pleading with the crowd, not hearing Archie, "Let him through, let him through, praise God."

An Ecstatic "wham."

Penelope, thinking of divine love, happy for this poor soul.

Archie reaching the stand. Grabbing Penelope's foot, "I love you," he yells, "I love you."

Penelope, unable to speak, but kicking at Archie.

The crowd, insane. Cursing Archie, cursing Penelope, crying, pushing.

Penelope, finding words now -- "Maniac, deviate." "Wham," on Archie's head.

"I love you," yells Archie, firmly grasping a leg.

"Dirty man, filthy man."

The police - - the crowd goes limp and then dissipates.
 Archie is left clamping a leg. Being pulled away now, moaning words of
 love to the vehemently pounding Penelope.
 "Sex maniac," screams the Colonel, as she turns from the spectacle of
 Archie being dragged to the patrol car.
 Archie in the backseat. A giant spider on his stomach.
 "Archie, you are no good."
 "No good," says Archie.
 "Damn right," says the spider.

EXEGESIS

*Dare we fear you, honest pariah
 Osculant to the infinite
 Tormented obliquely, crucified
 While cindered time languished in arid wastes
 Parched, abjured, forsaken You wept;
 Sanctity in haustoritic multitudes
 Peeping from shadows hiding in shadows
 To share upon seizure, grasping
 Your simulated procedure
 Elongating
 Their Souls, blind Vision in
 Innominate motion; Why
 Under Spring's osier should not
 Snowy owls proclaim grey gulls
 Departure
 By pungent streams;
 During after moments of ingratiuous departure
 Shining stainless obelisks protrude
 Piercing with silent screams
 All green skies; In under
 Between parabolic clandestine arches
 Crowds mob
 Not knowing, speaking
 At one another with sewn lips, beckoning
 Others to rejoice
 Dance in octagon dance and swirl
 Toothless calico ladies, turning in muffled
 Circles, watching
 To ascertain no one is
 Out of step
 Out of time
 Out of tune;
 Disharmony in musical
 Dear Hallowed Soul
 Lends grief to
 Bitter farewells;
 Van Gogh's ephemeral nudes
 Shown
 Bright white by
 His clouded ear
 Too radiant for pale canvas;
 Will our red man or blue rooster
 Determine the fat hens
 While violins play elegies for
 Dear lamented survivors;
 Frustration changes to discord, while
 Anguished thoughts dissolve anxious minds,
 Guiletta married the Count and
 By moonlight produced harmony
 UND HAST MICH ZU GRUNDE GERICHTET
 Rising to hear above scaleless mounds.*

Earl Paulus Murphy

FIRE OF DUSK

*Fire of dusk, the sunset scarlet—
Coals of embers are heaped
On jutting breasts of Mother Earth.*

*One lone man-made structure
Breaks into the bed of coals—
Ignite it would, but no.*

*Twinkling man-stars incandescing
The obscurity of the night
Bow beneath the coals.*

*The glowing bed dims its hue
As a lunar crest transfers
And cools a greater glow.*

*Die they may, the fires of dusk
Inject my soul a fire undimming
Passion? Love? Awe? Worship?—
All and none.*

David H. Denton

POSSIBILITIES

*Last time I was dying
this cat came crying
singing something
about my proverbial possibilities
of frying
or floating away to heaven
to sing praises
to a thing I had never seen before
that day.*

*I replied
just before I died that
I had seen a man
that had crapped out,
and was pitched
in a ditch
two thousand years ago
before a war,
and his bones were still there.*

*No! he cried
not the bones!
flesh and the soul,
you know
human images live forever,
we have to go someplace.*

*Oh yeah!
Can I make it to heaven
if I die
with my boots on?*

Tommy Winstead

BLACK LACE

*The lace is old and black,
ruined by a slow degrading
lack
of care.*

*It was first used
by grandmother
for an afternoon tea.
She sat like a
statue
a straight mold.*

*A pin of ivory
hung
like a weeping willow
from her
sunken chest.*

*The lace,
like an old manuscript,
was still
hard with
age;
Crumbling at one's
touch.*

*It lay there
dead
to perceptive
senses.
Like the relic of a
beautiful woman
no longer
beholding.*

*It was decrepit;
Age,
clutched by
immortality
longing for the last
fine strains
of
death.*

*I placed it back into its
tomb of
decay.
Not wanting to
banish
the memories of
someone.*

*Next day
I threw it away.
It was not one
of my
memories.*

Barbara Townley-Jones

A Short Story by Tommy Winstead

As Michael walked along Route 9 from Cam Lo he squeezed the folded letter in his hand so hard the perspiration smeared the ink into blots. He ran part of its contents through his mind several times. "Michael, there was positively no excuse for that atrocious episode in St. Louis. Being bodily thrown out of that questionable house was bad enough! But why did you conceive it necessary to stand in front of the St. Louis Police Department and scream at the top of your voice, the equivalent of, 'What the world needs is an excellent two dollar quickie!'"

Michael, now as then, had no logical answer. After the incident he had done what any young man of logic and creativity would have done. He enlisted, although under slight social pressure, in the Army. Arriving at the positive solution of forgetting the whole event, he walked on. Occasionally he met one of the sacred heifers which were quite content to remain in his path (a fact which somewhat lowered his frustration tolerance for the day).

"The war?" Michael asked the ragged villager walking in the opposite direction.

"Yes. The war."

Walking farther down the muddy road he met two more men. They too had been at war. He could tell by their faces, which told nothing really, except, "We have been at war."

"The war?"

The man with the pink bandages covering his hands and the deep empty eyes spoke in a monotone, "What war?"

"THE war! Does it hurt? Your hands I mean."

The second stranger looked away as he said, "Only when you lose."

"Where are you taking him?"

"To get his medal."

"What's he getting a medal for?"

"He killed a chicken."

"Well he certainly looks like a chicken killer!"

Farther down the road, which got muddier, sat an old man in the ditch. He said he had been a prophet of sorts back in the time when people believed in people (that was before the war with the Indians). He was now empty, possessionless, and hungry, but still a prophet. Without looking from the mud he spoke, "I once saw it written that there would be a war that would end all wars."

"Is this the war?"

"No. It was the last one."

"Then they lied."

"No, this is not a war? You see, times have changed, this is liberation!"

The young man walked on, deeper into the mud, thinking, "After the great war that ended all wars came liberation—of what!"

"This is love," the Chaplain said as he arched his extended arm around in a half-circle indicating infinity, "GOD is LOVE." He went on to explain the virtues of God's favorite son before asking if anyone desired to be saved. As a matter of fact a lot did, but they knew damn well there was nothing he could do, unless of course, he wanted to go do the dubious battle for them. This, most obviously, he did not wish to do, being a savior of mankind. He finished by leading a prayer which turned out to be one half prayer and one half a civilized (?) war cry (being the equivalent of, "Smear their God-damned Marxist ass!").

The men sat around in little groups, each man trying to absorb the precision smoothness of his weapon (which supposedly was to have been out dated with the invention of the pen) as they all, as a group, watched

the Chaplain fingering through his Bible when he stepped aside.

"You gotta hate 'em", the sergeant said, "You gotta hate 'em so God-damned bad you want to see their guts fall out!" He stood jabbing his finger through the air as he spoke, "If you don't stop them, then, by God, they'll kill you! You have to hate the skinny little bastards because . . ."

After shouldering his pack Michael picked up his weapon and walked to the formation, which was ready to move out. One last word from the sergeant, "You're not a bunch of teeny-boppers anymore, so remember to keep you heads up and your butts down. They don't give medals for ass-wounds! Not in this war (least-wise)!"

The men kneeled in the waist high grass as they challenged the fire of the enemy hidden in the not so distant trees.

"Don't jerk on the trigger! Squeeze it slowly."

"But this is hate. And I gotta feel it make them hurt."

"No. Squeeze it like—like it was a tit. Easy, sort of like you were teasing it."

"Lovingly!"

"Yeah, that's it. You got it."

"So now it's love. We lovingly hate your guts, Charlie. As a matter of fact, we're so damned lovingly about the whole situation the Man sent us here to deliver you from suppression. And someday you will be free to think, to resist, to liberate—you'll be free in the Great Society—someday—maybe—when the world has all its f-a-c-i-l-i-t-i-e-s united."

"Hey soldier! Wake up. This is war!"

"No! No! The Chaplain said . . ."

"Screw the Chaplain!"

"You crude son-of-a-bitch!" Slamming a new clip into the automatic weapon, Michael aimed and began emptying the clip into the trees. With each projectile went a salutation: To Charlie, with Love; To Charlie, a handful of rotting rice; To Charlie . . . stopping, he lowered the weapon, rubbed a speck of dust from his eye, raised the weapon and aimed—To Charlie, with Squalor—and put a bullet through his head.

"What the hell was the matter with him?"

"How should I know, this is . . ."

The gray twilight of 1984.

FREEDOM

*Freedom
is in a history book
I read a couple of times
about this piece of paper
that guaranteed that I could
be a me,
a separate identity 'me',
different from you
and them.
Then I read about this spirit
that makes the master,
and the master
has made a slave
of 'me'.
There is no 'you' and 'I'
anymore
we're 'us'.
The master makes us slaves now
they have taken 'you' and 'I'
out of the vocabulary in America
there is nothing left
but third person plural
objective case.
But I want to be 'me'
first person singular
in any case
I have to be free
to feel inside of me
without finding
"Conformity-confirmed"
imprinted
through-out my life
freedom will make me master,
spirits will make ghost stories
and alcoholics
anonymous
gods.*

Tommy Winstead

CINCINNATI CORDUROY

*Today there was nothing but
1917 mint carpet on fourth street,
my feet underneath me
were getting closer to their knees,
and I heard a pinch
from Sam's green swinging doors.
I admitted the rent
would soon be due on the high windows.*

*It had been thirty eight days
on the pretzel wagon trail,
a long while to find
a don't walk to show what not to do.
I found a good-book that read me
saying pawn shops smelled the most,
but I left it there wanting
to stay in the purple town once again.*

*The ancient kraut baker
gave me thirteen troubles that day,
but I didn't tell him
my hole had a pocket in it.
The aluminum foil thought ball I weighed
was getting too heavy,
but I numbly smiled,
for I knew it was in the black.*

*Now it was the last afternoon
of a complete screech of a month,
that ended on a sleet covered Tuesday
in the beginning of the year.
To see was to be a prophet,
and the mayor traveled as slow as I.
Yet the library lion had even lost his thorn
on this white ending day.*

Bill Wiedemann

INTERLUDE

*This is the time of the coming again,
A time for honeysuckle*

*resurrections
and lilies,*

*A time for old stones to be rolled away,
And new wine poured in old bottles.
This is a time for the old to be young,
And the young to be born again*

*"Before the silver cord be loosed,
Before the golden bowl be drained,
This is the time of the coming again."*

*A time to love and a time to hate
A time to reap and a time to sow
A time to lose and a time to keep
A time to laugh and a time to weep
A time to be foolish and a time to know
A time to come and a time to go
And a time to begin again.*

*This is a time to promise, a time to forget
Watching the snow retire, draining the earth
Laying it bare as a corpse that will warm again
Pulsate with flowers and gasp with the breath of winds
And the promise of unburst seed.*

*And we shall go through the streets where the
mourners walked
Baptized and anointed in the gold of summer suns,
And the promise of unborn rain.*

*"Before the dry heat cripples the root,
Before the locust devours the grain,
This is the time of the coming again."*

Judy Williams

MR. O. CYRUS

A Laedycal by Dennis Petrie

The words of a song I never knew run through my head tonight. The smoke of the fire rises in the darkness, taking with it blackened sheaths of paper that hold the wisdom of all the world, I think, rising to the skies. Marshmallow toasts on crooked sticks and unbent hanger-wires--ready for the burning before shish-ke-bob chants to the lightning sky.

A chant, I remember--a chant from a toned-down radio sitting in O. Cyrus' window on a sunny Sunday afternoon. A piano pounded in the closeness of the voices. I could only dream of the words the singers sang. For O. Cyrus was talking to me, forever talking to me. And I never listened to him and he never listened to the radio. He only had it on.

There is not a great crowd of us. Six from the eleventh class and other friends of Elvira in honor of Elvira's birthday. We eat the burnt and shake the wires and scatter the ashes and whisper in the quiet with firm feet pounding large rocks and small pebbles in an oval circle. Then Boston Blackie plays on the hotly screened-in porch--without even whipporwills or frogs at the pond or in honeysuckle. Elvira says, "Horace." She follows me to O. Cyrus' flower wagon parked at the coalhouse and we kiss Happy Birthday on a front fender.

Then through the stillness, through the heavy, flowerless lilac bush by the window, I hear the brightly front bedroom. A girl is playing the piano "Down Yonder" but slowly, so still her raven lengthy hairs don't even move down her back; and the words I dreamed come to me again. And Elvira says: "Horace." . . . and I move my hand and go to the window. I remember and repeat "And lightly touched my darkened eyes" and I realize that these are all I dreamed. I am sad, for these are all I dreamed but still I don't know what O. Cyrus said to me.

Elvira is smiling now, smiling now, rubbing my face and singing happy birthday. I like her hands. Marshmallows still crisp and -- Elvira's waist is soft, so soft I have never felt before.

"What," she says, "will you do now the Home is there? With the hearse sold and only the flower wagon?"

"Then I shall deliver flowers to the graves of those already buried," I wit and lie, sadly.

"And Iris?" she says. "What will she do?"

And I say, "She will greet the people under the neon light, and, through the doors, will plead that they should sign the pedestal please, but thoughtfully tell that their loved ones are already under. Her brightly son is being put on by the flowers sent. 'For this,' she will say with a lump in her voice, 'immediately follows a Time when a number of people have died for various reasons.'"

To her the words come so easily, I think.

Elvira's eyes are neither blue nor brown, but green that shines and sparkles now -- but now is soft and felty, seeing for all I am. She hands my hairs and bounces her off a white reflecting stone that is looming large in the grass beside the gravel. "Indian Summer, 1954," she says. "My birthday. Horace."

It is warmly said.

Kiss her.

"And lightly touched my darkened eyes, -- Another song with the same words, much later but still long ago, when O. Cyrus sits silent, staring in the coalhouse behind the Home he owns. (Iris is curled catlike on the carpet by the door, her carrot hair touching carrot-pink slippers fuzzy on the feet, with knees tucked in in the living room.) Alton Ray, usually doing the laying out, but sometimes bringing packages in, bestows a bottle of wanted peachy

brandy through the door of sun-slit slants and hands them, hands and glass, to the eyes of a pair of paralyzed feet and one gnarled hand in a wheel chair: O. Cyrus.

I, Horace, watch through the diagonal slits, with sun on my back and on my ears, and hear the songless words with music from the toned-town flower wagon Mr. Alton Ray left running. He fumbles with the cup and my father who art in the coalhouse pulls at the aluminum cap with his hands, not touching the wall with feet dead or wheel's chair. One-half cup of noisily whiffed-tasted mellow juice, slowly taken and easily - not knowing my father's wife is sound asleep and not caring what my/our Father Who Is in Heaven will think. No one is laying out today; tonight the purple neon sign not even shall come brightly on.

But now the flower wagon's tone is up, even above the shots of Boston Blackie over yonder through the scream-screens, and Albert Schweitzer's playing "All the Things You Are to Me" on an organ in a bank, the deep announcer said. Three more heartfelt Happy Birthdays and the last of the red-hot marshmallows crisp and we are with the piano girl, playing, only faster now and fastest: her raven hairs are swaying wholly, widely down her back and round her sweated breasts. "Someone beckoned to me" and, going to the window, I find an empty pan full of salted, buttered popcorn hulls. There's lightening cross the sky and thunder to the window near by me.

O. Cyrus, hunting for a grassy place to fish alone, once stopped by a darkmossed barn where an iron pump could be handed for water drips. O. pulled the pressure puller hard and got a drip before his fishing lines and corks and hooks were mashed with him when he was knocked by thunder - lightning struck a tree. They pulled him out by night light only, when he was found, and Alton Ray, the helpful, power-sawed the limbs and laid him out, and Iris nursed him well till he was up enough to roll the chair.

But I wasn't even conceived of them. Later I happened to come along, and, later still, Miss Mia Sobek, seventeen, watched me near a box of sand and plastic pool, with the shoulder strap of my blue-striped playsuit dinging-dangling always loose, and her fixing it rightly-well. Iris Cyrus worked the worst of all her life trying to people the pedestal and sadly shaking her head with a sigh. It was ever quiet and sunny and still behind the Home. Almost no one came, but O. Cyrus had the radio on in the back room even then. Mia Sobek only hummed to me without words - or even music.

Boston Blackie's off. They push the piano girl through the screened-in's screen door, leaving.

"Whee!" I say, and one more Huge Happy Birthday, but at the screen. Elvira says "Horace." . . . and holes the hook. She waves. The screen's spring she bounces and sounds as I gravel to the flower wagon. I hear the words again in the springing coils: "And lightly touched my darkened eyes. . . and please remember me. . ."

Remember now. O. Cyrus talking even on the winter's day when all was cold from school I came. The heater hummed and shook beside his bed; the radio was still and wooden, thickly closed between the window and the summer screens, outside. Beams reflected flowers on the linoleum backroom floor. The heater shook and hummed. Moist felt-hat hair ring round his head from riding to and back from being looked at long. His eyes, they said, "You weren't here when I was here, not even before I was gone. I still am here, but I am gone, and I shall soon be gone. Please. I would that I should be recalled, that you remember me, when you are finally gone from here and come when I am gone. Remember me." The eyes, they fell to filtered sun on flowered after-school time floor.

The flower wagon hums with leaking oil and liquid bubbling. Not even frogs or whipporwills are in the passing ponds, nor honeysuckled branches damp. The speaker's knob is turned down none to tone. But the words of a song I never knew ran through my head tonight.

As a student literary magazine, VOICES exists primarily to provide, through publication, encouragement and incentive for students interested in creative writing on the Western campus. Believing consideration of aesthetic values to be a significant aspect of the educational process, the editors of VOICES hope to provide an avenue of expression for student literary efforts possessing aesthetic merit. Through such expression, it is hoped that both writer and reader may benefit: the writer through the thought processes and disciplines involved in the creation of his work, and the reader through the thought processes and disciplines involved in reading, understanding, and appreciating the work.

VOICES is interested primarily in the most purely creative forms: poetry, short fiction, and drama. Although essays are occasionally published, they must be of a highly descriptive, imaginative, or creative nature. Philosophical essays, journalistic feature articles, book reviews, or editorials will not be considered.

ALL WESTERN STUDENTS INTERESTED IN CREATIVE WRITING ARE ENCOURAGED TO SUBMIT WORK TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PUBLICATION IN VOICES.

All material must be typed, and contributors should keep carbons of their work since manuscripts will not be returned. Students desiring help with their writing should enroll in the creative writing course (English 123) or contact one of the following English staff members:

Mr. Joseph Boggs—Seminar Center No. 1
Mr. John Spurlock—Seminar Center No. 1
Mr. Tom Jones—Rock House
Mrs. Mary E. Miller—Seminar Center No. 1
Mrs. Frances Dixon—Cherry Hall
Dr. Jim Wayne Miller, Foreign Language Dept. AA Building
Miss Wanda Gatlin—Rock House

Material to be considered for the fall issue should be mailed to VOICES, Box 21, College Heights, before November 15, 1967.

Special appreciation is expressed to the following people who helped make this issue of VOICES possible:

Mr. Dero G. Downing
Dr. Wilson Wood
Mr. and Mrs. Carl M. Warner
Mr. Clarence Tabor
Mr. Garland Van Zant
Miss Sheila Storm
Mr. George Hall
Mr. Russell Konrady